

EXHIBIT B

A fascinating history of the daily lives of Americans
in the first fifty years of the new republic

told often in their own words.

The years between the patrician leadership of George Washington and the campaign that elected William Henry Harrison marked a period of startling changes in American life. However, most Americans were enmeshed in the myriad ordinary concerns of their lives, and although deeply affected by the great events of the time, their concern with them was intermittent. Jack Larkin describes the often giddy texture of life as these Americans experienced it, weaving the disparate threads of everyday life into the rich, complicated tapestry of American history during this transitional period.

Recounting the customs and styles of life of ordinary people during a period of rapid and unsettling social and economic change, Jack Larkin, the chief historian at Old Sturbridge Village, the outdoor history museum in Sturbridge, Mass., illuminates an astonishing range of activities. These include infant-feeding; the care of chamber pots, privies and graveyards; the use of broadside ballads, pulpit songs and communal dances; the celebration of holidays and routines of travel; the production, design and use of clothing and household items; even the treatment of pets. Habits of speech and manners are sketched, as well as broad patterns of work, religion, sexuality and family life. Virtually all human activity in the late 18th and early 19th centuries comes in for scrutiny in this compact and insightful work.

—*New York Times Book Review*

"More a guide than an interpreter, Larkin, through the steady recreation of detail and the comments of well-chosen contemporary voices, succeeds in building a remarkable and tangible portrait of an era."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

A volume in the *Everyday Life* series

HarperPerennial

A Division of HarperCollins



290-0-06-0916

514952

2900060916065

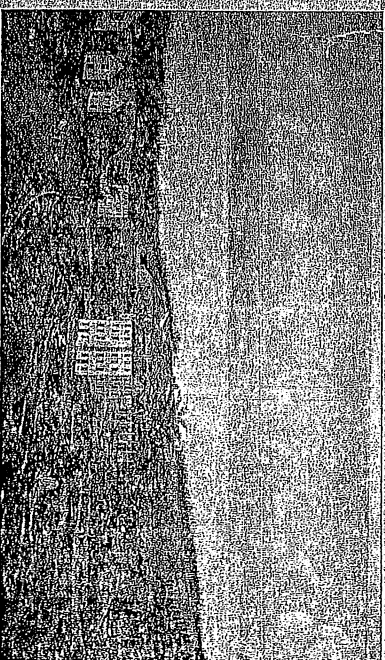
LARKIN
NG OF EVERYDAY LIFE

THE RESHAPING OF
EVERYDAY LIFE

Jack Larkin

E
164
L27
1988

THE RESHAPING OF EVERYDAY LIFE



1790-1840

In a triumph of the most challenging sort of historical research, Jack Larkin has retrieved the irretrievable: the intimate facts of everyday life that defined what people were really like.

—*American Heritage*

Jack Larkin

THE RESHAPING OF EVERYDAY LIFE

1790-1840

KOZ
206

THE EVERYDAY LIFE IN AMERICA SERIES

EDITED BY

RICHARD BALKIN

Everyday Life in Early America

BY DAVID FREEMAN HAWKE

The Reshaping of Everyday Life, 1790-1840

BY JACK LARKIN

The Expansion of Everyday Life, 1860-1876

BY DANIEL E. SUTHERLAND

Victorian America

BY THOMAS J. SCHILEREITH

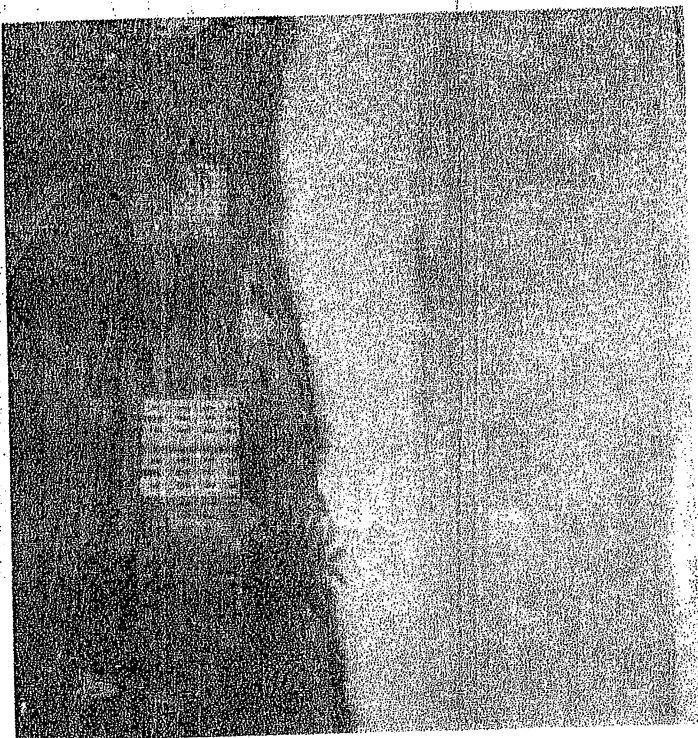
The Uncertainty of Everyday Life, 1915-1945

BY HARVEY GREEN

As Various as Their Land


BY STEPHANIE GRAUMAN WOLF

Globe Village, Southbridge, MA, 1823, by Francis Alexander.



The Reshaping of Everyday Life 1790-1840

JACK LARKIN

 HarperPerennial

A Division of HarperCollins Publishers
LIBRARY

FEB 05 2014

LOS ANGELES

To Barbara, and to the memory of my father-in-law

A hardcover edition of this book was published in 1988 by Harper & Row, Publishers.

THE RESHAPING OF EVERYDAY LIFE, 1790-1840. Copyright © 1988 by Jack Larkin. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information address Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 10 E. 53rd Street, New York, N. Y. 10022.

First PERENNIAL LIBRARY edition published 1989.

The Library of Congress has catalogued the hardcover edition as follows:

Larkin, Jack, 1943-

The reshaping of everyday life, 1790-1840.

Includes index.

1. United States—Social life and customs—1783-1865.

I. Title.

E164.L27 1988

973.4

87-46152

ISBN 0-06-015905-7

ISBN 0-06-091606-0 (pbk.)

04 05 RRD 30 29 28 27 26 25

lives is to give personal, experiential meaning to the bare bones of statistical description and generalization. Limits on the evidence and scope of historical inquiry mean that only a tiny fraction of the lives of past Americans can be recovered and understood in any detail. "Every individual," wrote another enormously perceptive portrayer of ordinary life, Harriet Beecher Stowe, "is part and parcel of a great picture of the society in which he lives and acts, and his life cannot be painted without reproducing the picture of the world he lived in." Capturing the commonplaces of past experience is a route to a fuller human understanding.

The beginning and ending years of this book, between the patrician leadership of George Washington and the democratic hoopla of the "log cabin and hard cider" campaign that elected William Henry Harrison, roughly mark off a time of often startling changes. During these decades the American people created a new national government, and a distinctive party system and culture of democratic politics. Their numbers continued to grow rapidly, as they had in the eighteenth century, nearly quadrupling between 1790 and 1840. They moved westward at an unprecedented speed, vigorously and often violently expanding the territorial limits of their society almost threefold. Americans built a national system of transportation on roads and rivers well before the railroad, and strikingly speeded up travel and the movement of goods and information. A new industrial economy emerged in the North, based on the organization of mass production in cities and rural communities alike and the first stages of mechanization; the calculating ways of the marketplace and the networks of commerce penetrated ever farther into the countryside. Reinvigorated by the increasing importance of cotton to industrial production, the slave-labor economy of the South expanded enormously. Measured by the total output of goods and services, Americans' average income per capita rose significantly. Yet the benefits of economic

growth were distributed with increasing inequality. The gap between the richest and the poorest Americans grew ever wider.

Successive waves of religious enthusiasm, the "Second Great Awakening," washed over communities in every region and created a powerful evangelical Protestant piety. What many Americans called a "spirit of reform" prompted them to examine and often to reconstruct their social arrangements and patterns of behavior—most explosively slavery, but also drink, schooling and childrearing, dietary and sexual habits, the role of women and of wage labor, and the care of criminals and the insane. They created an "age of association," covering much of the nation with thousands of voluntary associations from sewing circles to lyceums to Masonic lodges, and establishing new social and economic institutions on a state and national level.

But at the threshold of the nineteenth century, Americans still lived in a world of small scale and scarcity. People, goods and information moved slowly. The tools they used and the routines of their work, their materials and sources of power, would have been immediately recognizable to a man or woman of the seventeenth century.

Their lives continued to be constrained by the weather and the seasons. While assembling their energies to tame a continent they were still profoundly tied to the agricultural calendars of their localities, and each year's jagged alternations of heat and cold, its recurring times of health and sickness, birth, marriage and death.

The physical texture of American life was far closer to that in the villages of many third-world countries today than to anything in the present-day United States. Everywhere the nights were intensely dark and the stars intensely bright. Most houses were small and poorly lit. Americans were usually dirty and often insect-ridden. Smells—of the barnyard and stable, tannery and tavern, house and hearth, privy and chamber pot—

THE RESHAPING OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Americans were a predominantly rural people. In 1790, only one American in twenty lived in a place of more than twenty-five hundred people—and some of these were communities whose large areas held a predominantly scattered population. American cities grew rapidly in the next five decades, but as late as 1840, no more than one in nine were urban even in this modest sense.

When she spoke of Americans "hacking and hewing their way," Mrs. Trollope was literally correct. The early-nineteenth-century landscape was the result of an immense labor of land clearing that had begun early in the seventeenth century, clearing that had begun early in the seventeenth century, Americans on long-occupied farms knew, as a New England farmer's son said, that they were "the result of the labor of generations." Families in the West lived in small clearings next to stands of trees that had been "girdled," their bark cut through so that they would die, fall and rot to clear a new farm field. Americans had spent uncounted, exhausting hours with fire and ax, oxcart and stone drag, "making land," carving farms out of the forest. In the first half of the nineteenth century, as they completed the settlement of the wooded eastern portion of the "vast continent," their labor came to a climax. Shaped by their inheritance of land making, most Americans were deadly enemies of trees and woodlands. They vastly preferred the beauty of "a newly cleared piece of ground," noted the Englishman Godfrey Vigne in 1833, to "the immense forests" or picturesque wooded prospects that remained. Most American farmers, thought the British visitor Margaret Hall, "would scarcely allow a tree to stand" near their houses.

European travelers were accustomed to seeing closely settled agricultural communities, but they soon learned that the majority of American families lived well apart from each other, on their own farmsteads. "We have no villages in America," Albert Gallatin, who had been Jefferson's secretary of the treasury, told the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville in 1833. "that is to say none inhabited by people who cultivate the land." American

A Busy, Bustling, Industrious Population

farmers' houses were instead "scattered all over the country."

Most American rural communities were not sharply defined in space. Churches, stores and taverns were often strung along the roads, and families socialized and traded in country neighborhoods with vague boundaries. New Englanders continued to live closer together than other rural Americans, but most of them had long since abandoned their compact agricultural villages of the seventeenth century. As the Massachusetts clergyman Peter Whitney put it in 1796, their houses too "were scattered over the place without much order" on the roads that led to each community's centrally located meetinghouse and common. Families in the more thickly settled and cleared regions of America usually lived in sight of their nearest neighbors' houses, and at night could see the faint gleam of their candles. To the south and west dwellings became dispersed ever more thinly, as an early Western settler recalled, in "little clearings detached from each other by intervening forest, through which foot paths, bridle paths, and narrow wagon roads obstructed with stumps, wound their way."

What European observers might "take for villages," continued Gallatin, "had better be called towns as they are inhabited by shopkeepers, craftsmen, and lawyers." Clustered settlements in America were almost always outposts of commerce or industry. In the Northern countryside small crossroads communities and "center villages" arose by the hundreds after 1800 as places where farmers came to trade and find services; the appearance of these rural commercial places signaled the birth of the American small town.

Another kind of village was emerging alongside them in the rural landscape. Francis Alexander's 1832 painting of *Globe Village* in Southbridge, Massachusetts, shows a small cluster of wooden two- and three-story buildings in a landscape of farm fields and small woodlots. (See frontispiece.) This settlement too was rural, but not agricultural. Its small water-powered factory buildings, two- and four-family houses, and store were part of

8

THE RESHAPING OF EVERYDAY LIFE

the first phase of America's Industrial Revolution. "The manufacturing operations of the United States," wrote the Rhode Island industrialist Zachariah Allen in 1829, "are carried on in little hamlets . . . around the water fall which serves to turn the mill wheel." From Pennsylvania to southern New Hampshire, "mill villages" were built near many small and medium-sized streams. Beginning in the 1790s and with accelerated pace after 1820, rural factories harnessed waterwheels to pulleys and belts to drive machinery for spinning and weaving cotton and wool, or turning chair legs and gun barrels. Around the mills clustered the nation's first communities of factory workers.

In 1823 the site of Lowell was only a few farmers' fields being surveyed in an outlying corner of rural Chelmsford, Massachusetts. Less than two decades later, after the great falls of the Merrimack River had been harnessed, it was a true industrial city of twenty thousand, whose factories and boardinghouses reflected the organization of work, and the harnessing of power, on an unprecedented scale.

Gallatin might have admitted one important exception to his observation. There were true agricultural villages in America, and they were in the South. "The quarters of the slaves," noted the Englishman Isaac Weld in 1796, "give the residence of each planter the appearance of a little village," and travelers over the decades echoed him. Slave cabins on larger plantations were built close together along small "streets" in double or single rows, usually under the shadow of the planter family's "great house." Each quarter was a small, dense community of black households, whose adults left every morning for work in the fields.

Five seaport cities—New York, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Baltimore and Boston—each contained 90,000 people or more by 1840. New York City, with 312,000 inhabitants, "the great commercial maelstrom of the western world," as some Americans called it, was the largest. The other urban places of the United States—smaller ports on the coast, towns on inland riv-

"A Busy, Bustling, Industrious Population"

9

ers or major road junctions—ranged from 50,000 people on down.

American cities were important far beyond their size; streams of goods, people, livestock, information and ideas flowed between them and the villages and farms. They were settlements of merchants and artisans, laborers and mariners, teamsters and boatmen, places where goods were bought and sold, moved and made. Early-nineteenth-century urban settlements were "walking cities," crowded and relatively small in area. They had to be compact, because almost all city dwellers walked everywhere and the transportation of goods was slow. Their streets were crowded with men and women afoot, and iron-tired wagons grated noisily over the paving stones. When Zadoc Long of Maine stayed in Boston to purchase goods for his country store, he complained about the noise making it hard to sleep. Cities were noisier, dirtier and more unhealthy than rural communities, but far more exciting, more anonymous, quicker-paced and immersed in cash and trade. They were the focal points of culture as well as commerce. Just as cities took in agricultural produce and rural migrants, they exported not only goods but books and dress fashions, songs and dances, child-rearing ideas and furnishing styles to the countryside.

"In Our Family"

Just after Chloe Peck was married in Rochester, New York, in 1820, she wrote to her sister of "our family, which consists of 7 persons." Living and eating together in the Pecks' establishment were the newly wedded couple and five unrelated men and boys—the journeymen and apprentices of Everard Peck's bookbinding shop. Today "family" denotes people bound together by marriage and kinship, and "household" describes a group residing and taking their meals together, but early-nineteenth-century Americans almost invariably echoed Chloe Peck in describing their domestic groups as their "families."

THE RESHAPING OF EVERYDAY LIFE

that settlers had made to new crops and to local soils and climates. The interweaving rhythms of crops and livestock, the timing of work on the land, the handling of animals, the choice of tools, were governed by the accumulated experience of farming communities and passed from one generation to the next. Encountering different soils and conditions as they moved west, American families retained their farming practices when they could and changed them when they had to.

The best-selling publications in early-nineteenth-century America were almanacs, the small pamphlets that came off the presses in many thousands of copies each year. Farmers read them much less for their predictions of the weather, jocular stories or solemn advice than for the traditional lore of astrology. For men and women who worked daily with plants and animals, the natural cycles of growth and procreation were still powerful mysteries, governed at least in part by the phases of the moon and the great celestial wheel of the zodiac. Rural folk believed that many things must be done, or left undone, during the reign of each constellation," recalled the Cincinnati physician Daniel Drake of his Kentucky boyhood, and that "the moon had a powerful influence on vegetation and animal life." Women planted radishes in their gardens "downward at the decrease of the moon, for they tapered downwards." Some crops had to be planted at the dark of the moon and still others while it was waxing toward full. The annual hog slaughtering in December had to avoid a waning moon as well; otherwise "the pork would shrink and wither away in the barrel." Choosing the time to wean a baby or a calf, or to begin making butter, sometimes awaited the arrival of a more auspicious sign in the heavens.

The most insistent and visible rhythms of Americans' work were those of plowing, planting, cultivation and harvest. They ranged from the long and intricate patterns of tobacco and rice cultivation to the sharp, comparatively short struggles to bring in the hay or harvest the wheat fields. In southern Louisiana the harvest season for the two great crops, cotton and corn, ended

"A Busy, Bustling, Industrious Population"

only a few weeks before planting began again: "ploughing, planting, picking cotton, gathering the corn, and pulling and burning stalks took up the whole of the four seasons of the year." In Vermont and New Hampshire the time between plowing and harvest was startlingly brief. The most widely familiar routine of work was that of growing corn, America's virtually universal crop.

Across the United States, families North, West and South, white and black, shared the routines of growing corn, a staple in the diets of both people and livestock. Most often they planted it in "hills" three or four feet apart. Men plowed and cross-plowed their fields to start the hills, then dropped and covered the seeds. Corn did not require an all-out, intensive effort at harvest time; instead, it needed steady cultivation from late spring through the end of summer to kill the weeds and build the soil around each cornstalk. Often there were three hoeings—a "weeding," a "half-hilling," and a complete "hilling." Men went into the field to cut the ripened ears off the stalks and carted them back to the barn. They cut the stalks down for livestock fodder or allowed them to stand in the field for browsing. Husking and shelling corn were later fall and winter work, which often became the occasion for neighborhood "frolics," to share the work and celebrate the end of the harvest.

In New York State and New England, the five or six weeks of the haying season, between late June and early August, were the time of most concentrated effort, "the hardest part of the labor required to be performed on a farm," as the *Maine Farmer* noted in 1832. Throughout the countryside, most other work ceased as craftsmen, merchants and their clerks left shops and stores to go into the field. While he was supervising a force of teamsters hauling stone to repair Boston pavements in the 1820s, Asa Sheldon found it difficult to keep them at work during haying time. Farmers came right into the city to recruit his men on the street.

Haying, wrote John Burroughs of New York, had "the urge,

cans' extraordinary mobility, their character as a "go-ahead" people, pushed them to travel as far and as fast as they could on roads that remained difficult.

Passing through western New York in 1822, the Englishman Henry Addington several times saw "the wreck of a coach or wagon, sticking in picturesque attitudes in some hole in the low road. . . . How any vehicle can get through such fearful breakers as those routes present sometimes for four or five miles continuously it is difficult for those who have experienced their ferocity to comprehend." Travelers in the early United States spent a good deal of ink on describing and lamenting the conditions of the roads they traversed; it was natural enough, since they usually spent more time on the highways than they did at their stopovers and destinations. Legally, American roads were defined as very wide rights of way—10, 20, even 40 rods wide, or from 160 to over 600 feet. But in reality most highways were narrow tracks within those bounds. Roads began as single-tracked bridle paths, usually later widened to accommodate carts and wagons, but off the largest thoroughfares there was often not enough space for two vehicles to pass abreast. The remainder of the right of way was often left in woodland or, if the timber had been cleared, allowed to grow up in brush or used for grazing livestock.

Northern hill roads, reminiscent of a Massachusetts man, were "strewn with loose stones of assorted sizes, over which horses tumbled." In the "rich mud roads of Ohio" that Harriet Martineau encountered, the slow-going sandy thoroughfares or "clayey roads cut into deep ruts" of the coastal South, teamsters often mired their wagons to the hubs. Farther west, or in newly settled northern New England, travelers saw nothing for hundreds of miles but newly cleared tracks still encumbered with tree stumps. Worst of all were the "corduroy" roads built of transversely placed logs, which Americans sometimes used to bridge swampy areas; to Henry Addington in 1823, traveling on

them seemed "an uninterrupted series of plunges from one hole to another."

A foreign traveler's readiness to be critical of American manners, social order and domestic arrangements usually increased as his ride became bumpier. But the reasons for the state of the early Republic's roads were not mysterious. Building and maintaining relatively comfortable and moderately safe roads took enormous amounts of labor. Gangs of men and teams of oxen or horses were required to remove rocks, fill in holes, dig ditches for drainage, grade surfaces with shovels, cart and spread stone and gravel. Thinly stretched town and county governments were primarily responsible for their construction and upkeep. Americans made the immense effort of building good roads only where population, commerce and traffic were dense enough to promise a return on the investment to the company or the community. In the Northeast and the more densely settled parts of the West, roads steadily improved in construction techniques, materials used and maintenance. Bringing Western or Southern roads up to the standards of Connecticut or eastern Pennsylvania, let alone the macadamized standards of England near London, was both beyond the resources of society and economically irrational. Thus American roads declined in speed, comfort and safety south of Baltimore and west of the Appalachians.

Foot and Horseback, Wagon and Chaise

Local travel, like local population movement, was less noteworthy and harder to see. For most Americans around 1800, country neighborhoods of a few dozen farms or less constituted the normal boundaries of everyday movement, on visits that intertwined socializing, neighborly help and economic exchange. Beyond their neighborhoods they made less frequent trips to artisans' shops, stores, taverns and churches at

villages or crossroads settlements. In a New England town families even on the most outlying farms could make these journeys every week since they were rarely more than a few hours' walk or an hour's ride away. In frontier Kentucky families might go a month or more between such trips. Although goods sometimes moved long distances by sea in pre-Revolutionary America, and settlers continuously pushed into the interiors of the seaboard states, few people traveled routinely outside their daily and weekly circles of neighborhood. By 1830 gradually improving local roads and more vehicles meant that ordinary folk could move about more often and more easily within their communities.

Hundreds of thousands of people—their numbers seriously underestimated by observers chiefly impressed with the more dramatic traffic of horses and vehicles—still traveled primarily on foot. In early nineteenth-century landscape paintings which showed Americans on the road, there were sometimes pedestrian figures in the background, occasionally pictured giving directions to mounted travelers or families riding in carriages. "Without thinking it a trouble," as Alonzo Lewis of Lynn, Massachusetts, recalled, many poorer Americans were accustomed to walking "from three to six miles on Sabbath to meeting," or to visit stores and taverns.

Children ranked lowest on the scale of access to horses and vehicles and walked everywhere. In the towns of New England, the number and location of neighborhood district schools reflected a social consensus about just how far the younger scholars, four- or five-year olds, should walk—usually a distance of up to two miles one way. The New England clergyman William Ellery Channing recalled starting school before he was three years old; when he tired on the mile-long journey he was carried on his older brother's back. Youths and young men in particular were accustomed to covering long distances on foot. As a fourteen-year-old, P. T. Barnum was sent for a summer's higher schooling to an "Academy" three miles away. He

"marched and countermarched" the distance "six times per week." Young New Englanders "working out" during the week in other communities as farm laborers or schoolteachers sometimes walked eight to ten miles to be home on Sunday. Anxious to see a ship launched in Salem harbor, Asa Sheldon and a group of twelve- and thirteen-year-old farm boys walked fifteen miles from their town of Wilmington, Massachusetts, to the city overnight, spent the day and walked back, exhausted, the next evening.

In between "shank's pony," as walking was called, and the steam-powered railroad was the horse—the prime mover of early nineteenth-century travel. Reliable figures are difficult to come by, but the number of horses in the United States probably grew faster than the population between 1790 and 1840 as their use as draft animals in place of oxen expanded and the number of horse-drawn vehicles increased. In the United States of 1840 there was on the average about one horse for every four or five people. After that time the ratio of horses to people ceased to increase and then slowly declined, as city-dwelling families, who were much less likely to own horses, became an ever greater proportion of the population. The evidence of tax assessments and household inventories makes it clear that they were far from universal possessions. They were distributed less equally than are automobiles among the American population today. The great majority of urban families owned no horses, as did close to half the farm families in many New England towns, where oxen remained the primary draft animals. Even in regions where horses were almost universally used for farm work, there were many rural Americans who exchanged labor or farm produce with better-endowed neighbors for the use of horses in plowing, hauling, or traveling.

Through the eighteenth century, vehicles other than crude, slow and uncomfortable two-wheeled carts were rare. Americans undertook most of their nonpedestrian travel on horseback. The number of conveyances and work vehicles

times before I shall see another *human* that does not belong to the family."

Some mistresses of plantations, particularly in the new cotton country of Alabama and Mississippi, felt similarly "entombed," although they were hardly alone. They were responsible for managing the domestic life of dozens, sometimes hundreds of others, white and black. Yet confined by childbearing and their heavy daily responsibilities, they too visited far less often than their husbands. Plantation life was punctuated by dances and open-air barbecues, elaborate christenings and weddings, but they were occasional events, not weekly ones. There was too much work to do and too much distance to cover.

But even widely scattered families sought to create a web of "private and family visiting with abundance of small talk" across the distances that separated them; their "desire for society," a Kentuckian recalled, was like "the desire of a hungry family for food." Frequent isolation also made them "social and hospitable," remarkably generous to acquaintances and passing travelers: "their insulation makes them glad to see each other." Less frequent sociability was often more intense. Southerners and Westerners defined their neighborhoods more widely in space than closer settled Northerners, and they built their social networks on more intermittent contact. A Southern planter's "notions of space" were "so liberal," a Northerner noted in the 1830s, "that he will readily ride a dozen miles to dine." Cross-roads churches or stores were often the centers of social interaction for areas several miles around.

Greeley remembered how his parents passed the nights in singing ballads and exchanging old stories with their New Hampshire neighbors. In the most pious of American households visitors may have confined their conversation to the most recent Sabbath sermon, or the prospects for a religious revival. More often, thought a Massachusetts man, visits were "sometimes made an occasion for gossip and tattle"; more charitably put, they dealt with the tangible and prosaic concerns of

everyday life. Eighteen-year-old Zeloda Barrett of New Hartford, Connecticut, took down "the heads of the discourse" when Eliphalet Ensign and his family visited the Barretts on a January evening in 1804. "1st was about Swine," she wrote, noting a conversation about livestock. "2nd Demicrat pigs" indicated lamentation in Federalist New Hartford about the recent success of Jefferson's party. The next topic of discussion was "about Mr. Spencer and Mr. Smith's arbitration," the settlement of a local property dispute. As the "discourse" ranged further, Zeloda kept track of it with at least an inward smile, from "Mrs. Ensign's sore finger" to "Colonel Kellogg's commission for a general" in the state militia. The evening concluded with heated talk "about the meetinghouse being seated," an important issue in the community as it concerned how families were to be assigned their pews in the Congregational meetinghouse.

The times of social gathering in the American countryside moved against the season-driven swings of agricultural work. Between the spring plowing and fall harvest, visits were shorter and gatherings less frequent. In July, during the rushed, exhausting and anxious labor of getting in the Northern hay crop, most other activities were suspended. Stores and shops shuttered their doors or stood almost empty, visits sharply declined, few couples married and few children were conceived.

"On a late autumn day" after the crops had been brought in, recalled Ellen Rollins, the store in Wakefield, New Hampshire, "was like a miniature fair.... Incoming and outgoing wagons kept up a constant procession." The stores of rural America were more than their communities' crucial economic link to wider markets and manufactured goods. They were central gathering places that linked households and neighborhoods, community forums and information centers. Particularly just before planting or past harvest they were lively and crowded places. While "loafers . . . smoked and gossiped on the bench outside," men and women talked at country stores "of stock and

produce; of sickness and mortality," and discussed the most recent births and marriages.

Economic exchanges and social relationships were deeply intertwined; business transactions proceeded at a leisurely, conversational pace. Husbands and wives headed for different parts of the store; "men made their coarser purchases" of tools, tobacco, hardware, while "women pulled over" the storekeeper's bolts of cloth, shoes, dishes, ribbons, combs and buttons, "and what they were too poor to buy talked over with admiring neighbors."

Winter in the Northern states was a contradictory season, a time of growing discomfort and greater leisure. Family life contracted into a room or two, and even routine outdoor chores grew increasingly difficult as the temperature dropped. In severe cold and storm, households could spend weeks in isolation. But when traveling was good "in the winter season"—on sleighs over frozen roads—"alternating visiting through a neighborhood in the evening was quite common," as Lyndon Freeman remembered. Winter was also the courting season, a time young people would later pleasantly remember for its parties, sleigh rides, singing schools and dances. Stores did less business in the winter, but often stayed open as men gathered there, sometimes late into the evening, and "compared the grubs of cattle; made note of prices; forestalled the weather; praised the work of wives and daughters."

Urban Americans lived closer to one another than did those anywhere in the countryside. Some city neighborhoods had a closely knit social life centered around workshops and stores, the taverns and groceries where artisans and laborers gathered. Their wives walked in and out of each other's dwellings several times a day and could sit together outside on the steps. But cities were not necessarily places of social intimacy. Many, perhaps most, American city dwellers did not stay put long enough to develop long-enduring social connections. Poor and transient city neighborhoods created a real if always changing commu-

nity life that depended on quickly integrating newcomers into the social web.

But once residents of the larger American cities left the small worlds of their neighborhoods, they plunged into a "world of strangers"—a sea of people, few of whom even residents of long standing could identify. By the 1830s, New York had already become the quintessential world of strangers to many Americans; they saw the hurrying and unknowable throngs on Broadway as a stunning contrast to the communities of village and countryside.

Far freer than other women from household work, the wives and daughters of "the wealthier members of the community" in American cities, as the visiting Thomas Hamilton observed, spent much of their time in elaborate and very different networks of social exchange. In the evenings they "opened their houses to the reception of company," giving and attending dinner parties, dances and formal balls. They turned neighborly visiting into formal "morning calls," adopting "calling cards" and an increasingly complex etiquette which determined the length and frequency of calls, whether a call should be returned or not and the sorts of people to whom a family was, or was not, "at home." Families connected by kinship, business and politics interchanged calls and invitations, but ranked and classified their acquaintances in ever more precise grades of social acceptability. Etiquette books, which articulated the rules of such social interchanges, sold increasingly well. Wealthy and fashionable families in Philadelphia, Hamilton thought, barricaded themselves behind "a system of exclusion" as rigorous as any in aristocratic England.

In the small, closely packed villages of the slave quarters, blacks led a communal life that was only poorly known to their masters. After their day's work they sat "up half the night, and over a fire in all seasons," Isaac Weld observed. Slaves passed their evening hours visiting, moving freely in and out of each other's cabins on the street, or talking and singing outdoors. On